

# POWER

Ethel Park  
Washington, La.

## Washington, LA

SINCE 1720

BE A WINNER—  
ANNUAL MEETING

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A SCHOLARSHIP

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The Official Publication of the Southwest Louisiana Electric Membership Corporation

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COVER: photo by Erin Z. Bass



## TAKE NOTE



# ANNUAL MEETING

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR **SLEMCO'S 88TH ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING** **SATURDAY, JUNE 14, AT LAFAYETTE'S CAJUNDOME**

Be a part of the fun! Doors open at 6 a.m., with plenty of hot Community Coffee as you visit with your friends and neighbors. Coffee is free and the Cajundome will have other refreshments available for purchase. No outside food or drink is allowed, per Cajundome policy. *Lucky Number: 3036448002.*

Music will start at 6:30 a.m., so wear your dancing shoes and help keep the dance floor hopping. Vitalant will hold its annual blood drive at our meeting. Your continued generosity in this annual drive is always appreciated because of the continuing demand for blood in our communities.



Attendees have a chance to win valuable prizes. Prize drawings begin at 8 a.m., and winning names will be drawn until our business

meeting begins at 10 a.m. Brief reports from the company's officers and legal counsel will inform members on SLEMCO operations. Drawings will also determine who will receive \$40,000 in college scholarships.



When the business portion of the meeting concludes, our scholarship drawing will award college funds of \$2,000 each to 20 lucky students.



Then, to end our meeting on a high note, we'll draw for our grand prizes. *Lucky Number: 2225538000.* 🍀

## Commercial Customers Can Enter Prize and Scholarship Drawings Too

SLEMCO commercial customers wishing to participate in the prize drawings must drop off a letter to SLEMCO's main office by June 13 naming their company's authorized representative.

After presenting ID on the day of the meeting, that representative will receive a card for the prize drawing. Owners of commercial establishments who are SLEMCO customers may also sponsor their children, themselves or a spouse for the scholarship drawing, but only if they own more than 50 percent of the company, corporation or partnership. *Lucky Number: 4516163402.* 🍀



Proof of business ownership is required when a business sponsors a scholarship applicant.

# Gary Smith

*Dedicated to serving our communities*

**ST. LANDRY PARISH BOARD MEMBER GARY SMITH OF BRISTOL** (a small rural community about seven miles SE of Church Point), knows a thing or two about the power industry and what it takes to provide what he calls the “Gold Standard” in power reliability and customer service. Before representing SLEMCO customers on the board of directors, he worked for SLEMCO customers as the company’s Chief Financial Officer. Accounting, HR and IT were all under his supervision. He retired in 2013 after 27 years of service.

“The current board works together with management, each member bringing their own skillset to the table for SLEMCO,” he explained. “That’s where my skillset—finances and accounting—benefits employees and customers. We use our collective experience to keep SLEMCO financially strong and able to attract and retain high-quality employees to provide the most reliable, affordable and customer-focused service possible. Our entire organization sets very high standards that we each strive to meet, every single day and night. That’s why I call it the Gold Standard.”

Growing up on main street in Church Point also meant spending time in rural Acadia and St. Landry Parish at his grandparents’ home that used SLEMCO electricity. Gary’s father was an entrepreneur with a grocery store, rental property and a cattle farm that used SLEMCO electricity.

Gary has farms of his own, two of which were recently honored as being in his family for over 100 years. His sugar cane farm is powered by SLEMCO. So, it wasn’t too big of a surprise that Gary ended up working for SLEMCO—but only after first working at both Gulf States Utilities (now Entergy) and CLECO.

“I knew in the 8th grade that I wanted to be in finance when I grew up,” he explained. “My family members were business people and were a great influence on me, especially my mother. I attended LSU and lived in Tiger Stadium dorms all four years before graduating with a double major in accounting and finance.”

After graduating from LSU, he married the love of his life, the former Evelyn Boudreaux also of Church Point. Together they headed to Texas, where Gary went to work for Peat Marwick Mitchell & Co (now KPMG), a national CPA firm in Houston, but was drafted by the US Army shortly thereafter. He was honorably discharged as an E-5 two years later.

Gary strongly feels that God has been very good to him, placing him at just the right place and time on many occasions in his life. Though he absolutely did not want to move to Texas

after the service, as luck would have it, the only job he could find was for Gulf States Utilities Entergy in Beaumont.

However, while visiting back home one weekend, a friend of Evelyn’s had just recently had a baby and Evelyn wanted to go by for a quick visit. Gary didn’t want to stop by. Well, it’s a good thing Evelyn insisted, because it put them at the right place, at the right time to meet the CFO of CLECO, who promptly offered Gary a job back home in Louisiana—in Lafayette to be exact—where the CLECO accounting department was located.

Then, another fateful visit, this time from one of SLEMCO’s former CEOs, landed him a job offer to become SLEMCO’s assistant controller. As they say, the rest was history.

“It didn’t take long to realize what a great organization I had joined,” said Gary. “We used to call our way of thinking ‘the SLEMCO way’ of doing things. I’ve always called it the ‘Gold Standard’ way of doing things. We have always aimed to work harder, respond faster, and perform better and more efficiently than the competition. We still continually improve our systems and processes to help employees and customers and to maintain that Gold Standard.”

To this day, SLEMCO is nationally recognized as an industry leader in electric power distribution.

Under his direction, many “firsts” were implemented at SLEMCO. Sophisticated departmental budgeting, using regression analysis to forecast sales, direct payroll deposits, paperless timesheets, and other processes that made the organization leaner than it had already been.

Gary was also part of a team that financed/refinanced millions of dollars in electric distribution infrastructure that reduced our interest rates, negotiated annexation of customers by the City of Lafayette, and negotiated long-term power contracts, all of which resulted in significant savings to SLEMCO customers throughout Acadiana. *Lucky Number: 2312448001.*



Civically, he served on the St. Landry Parish Economic Development Board, is a Louisiana Notary Public and a member of Church Point American Legion Post 225.

Despite all his career accomplishments, Gary is first and foremost a deeply devoted family man. Together with his quick-witted, fun-spirited, intelligent, adventurous and authentically charismatic wife of 53 years, Evelyn, they raised three highly successful daughters—one is a civil engineer, one a CPA and one is a law school dean. Six grandchildren are also an integral part of the family pack. Together the entire family enjoyed many travel adventures around the globe before Evelyn succumbed to cancer in May of 2022.

When not playing golf or working on genealogy projects, Gary continues the family tradition of travel, attending sporting and school events of the grands, and celebrating holidays with everyone, always making sure Evelyn’s favorite color—yellow—is prominently on display somewhere in their midst. ☺

**SLEMCO 2025 NOMINATING COMMITTEE**

**ACADIA PARISH**—Fern Hebert  
1116 N. Eastern Avenue  
Crowley, LA 70526

**LAFAYETTE PARISH**—Jimmy Price, Jr.  
209 La Rue Christ Roi  
Carencro, LA 70520

**ST. LANDRY PARISH**—Brent Boudreaux  
2581 Higginbotham Highway  
Church Point, LA 70525

**ST. MARTIN PARISH**—Patricia Broussard  
3667-B Catahoula Highway  
St. Martinville, LA 70582

**VERMILION PARISH**—Boyd Landry  
7375 US Highway 167  
Maurice LA 70555

The committee will meet April 1, 2025, at 9:30 a.m. at the SLEMCO office, 2727 SE Evangeline Thruway, Lafayette, LA 70508.

(s) John B. Meaux, *Board Secretary*

“ We have everything you need to live in town and visit. Spend a day, spend a week and have fun with the small things in life.”



# SMALL TOWN

# BIG VISION

story by ERIN Z. BASS

Built in the 1840s and on the National Register of Historic Places, Wolff Hall hosts weddings and special events in downtown Washington.

A new hotel, manufacturing facility and lots more development in store for Washington.

**M**AX KLAUS EMIGRATED FROM GERMANY TO WASHINGTON, LA., in 1878. He most likely traveled down Bayou Courtableau on a steamboat to a small town that was bustling as the largest inland port between New Orleans and St. Louis, Mo. He went into the dry goods business with his aunt and purchased the store from her family in 1887. Max married Sarah Rebecca Wolff and they had nine children. The family lived on the top half of Klaus General Store, and Max’s daughters went on to run the business until 1957. The building was a hardware store and an antiques shop before falling into disrepair.

That’s how Architect Stephen Ortego found the old Klaus General Store at 203 N. Main St. when he purchased it in 2022. His parents are both from Washington, and his grandmother’s house was just two blocks down from the hotel, so he saw the potential in the little town.

Ortego started construction on what is now Hotel Klaus in 2023, and the doors opened this past August. Max’s home and general store are now a nine-room boutique hotel with several rooms named after his family members. There’s the Carol Wolff Suite with a bay window, lounge area and upper balcony overlooking the courtyard and rose-colored Aunt Gussie’s Room, both named for Max’s daughters. Sarah and Max’s Room off the upstairs grand hall is golden-colored with an original fireplace grate from the Victorian era.

Ortego says the idea of a boutique hotel just “made sense. We think Washington can be like the St. Francisville for Lafayette.”

**A**s the third oldest European settlement in the state, Washington has seen some eras go by. It was originally founded in 1720 as a French trading post and experienced its heyday in the 1800s as an important steamboat port. The coming of the railroad in 1896 ushered out the steamboat era, and the last boat left the landing in 1900. Washington remained preserved in time, though. Eighty percent of the town’s buildings are on the National Historic Register, and its historic homes, 19th century brick storefronts and registered live oaks are mapped out in a “Historic Walking Tours” brochure available at the hotel and Town Hall.



Photo by Erin Z. Bass

Hotel Klaus is now open in the old Klaus General Store on Main Street.



The Jacob Plonsky House dates to 1904 and is one of the many homes to see in Washington's Historic District.



**ATTRACTIONS IN WASHINGTON**

**Washington Museum & Tourist Center**  
404 N. Main St.  
Open Fri-Sun,  
10am - 3pm

**Old Schoolhouse Antique Mall**  
123 Church St.  
Open Fri-Sun,  
9am - 5pm

**Ethel Park**  
405 N. Washington St.

**Old Courtableau Cafe**  
104 S. Main St.  
Reopening soon

**Steamboat Warehouse**  
525 N. Main St.  
Open Tue-Sat, 5pm,  
& Sun 11am - 2pm

**Hotel Klaus**  
203 N. Main St.  
Front desk open 1 - 6pm

**Nanny Belle's Antiques**  
402 S. Main St.  
Open Fri-Sat, 9am - 6pm  
& Sun noon - 6pm

**Community Festival**  
Main Street  
March 22

A state mecca for antiques, the town's recently restored Old Schoolhouse Antique Mall still draws visitors Friday through Sunday, while the Steamboat Warehouse Restaurant is open for dinner Tuesday through Saturday and for brunch on Sunday. Hotel Klaus is just one more reason to visit Washington and stay awhile. Adjacent to the hotel lobby, the old mercantile store fronting Main Street is being renovated for a restaurant and bar—with the store's original wooden ladder staying to help reach top-shelf liquor.

"The town has had a rebirth," says Mayor Dwight Landreneau. "Everybody does a little bit, and it adds up to a whole lot."

Landreneau was born down the road in Ville Platte but has lived in Washington his entire life. He was appointed mayor four years ago when the city was in a financial crisis. He has the more than \$750,000 debt he inherited almost paid off and has changed the way Washington does business. Support from legislators in Baton Rouge, grants and private donations have made infrastructure improvements, a new green space, an electric vehicle charging station and an RV Park possible. "With investment, people are seeing the excitement of growth," he says.

Another exciting announcement came from Southland Industrial Coatings over the summer. One of the largest steel fabricators in the region is investing \$13.1 million in Washington and creating 200 new jobs during the construction phase and another estimated 120 after that. The new fireproofing facility is expected to be ready by spring. *Lucky Number: 4519286100.*

"This is a tremendous asset to Washington," says Landreneau. "People are anticipating growth, especially in real estate, with the facility coming."

Ortego says he knows of several people who have relocated to Washington and are fixing up one of the many historic homes. He notes the town's walkability as a big draw. "People walk a lot here," he says. "You have to walk to the post office to get



Photos by MAKEMADE

The main hall upstairs at Hotel Klaus

your mail because it's not delivered here. People walk their dogs."

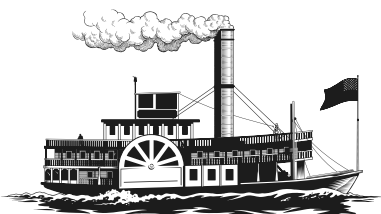
Hotel Klaus has already welcomed guests from New Orleans, Lafayette, Canada, New York and California. Wedding parties booking across the street at Wolff Hall also keep the rooms full. The hotel guidebook includes French phrases like *Comment ca va?* and suggests tuning clock radios in each room to KBON or KRVS for some "local chanky-chank music." It also advises guests that the town's customary steamboat whistle blows at 6 p.m. each day to "honor the transportation that put Washington on the map."

"My hope is we can start to develop more recreation and tourism because of the historic houses," says Ortego. "There are 60-something blocks of national historic district, and it's a great mix of colonial all the way through Victorian. There are two bayous, a boat launch and I'd like to see more restaurants and bars, kayaking, shops and other lodging opportunities."

More antiques shops coming back to town and historic home tours would be the icing on the cake.

Ortego's vision aligns with Landreneau's. The mayor would like to see another full-service grocery store, a coffee shop and a resurgence of antiques in the future, but for now, Washington is on its way to bustle once again as it did in the days of Max Klaus. *Lucky Number: 4516795903.*

"We have a pharmacy, a baking shop, a gas station," says Landreneau. "We have everything you need to live in town and visit. Spend a day, spend a week and have fun with the small things in life." 📍



# SOUTH LOUISIANA OYSTER PRIMER

**Slurping down a platter of raw oysters is no longer limited to the “ber” months.**

Oysters are safe to eat year-round in South Louisiana thanks to modern refrigeration, new farming practices and food safety regulations. According to the Louisiana Office of Tourism, peak oyster harvesting season is generally from October through April. This is when raw oysters are at their freshest due to cooler weather, but oysters can safely be eaten 12 months out of the year—and you may even notice subtle changes in flavor, depending on the season and their place origin.

## OYSTERS ON THE MENU

### ATLANTIC

Large, sweet and briny with a smooth shell

### PACIFIC

Small and sweet with deep, pointy shells

### GULF COAST

Large, tender, mild and creamy

### TEXAS

Sweet with a salty aftertaste

story by ERIN Z. BASS

## Methods of Farming

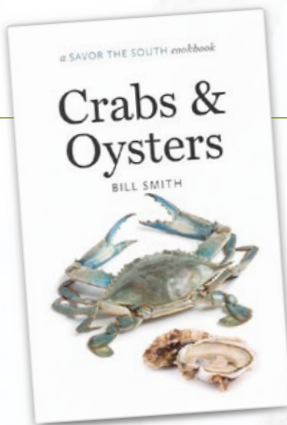
Before the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, Louisiana produced 14 million pounds of oyster meat. Production was cut in half in 2010, and the state’s public oyster grounds have struggled to return. As a result, smaller “farms” like Barataria Beauties in Grand Isle have popped up. Oysters are grown from seed and moved into bigger cages or nets as they grow. The end product is a smaller boutique oyster that’s served at Lafayette restaurants like Vestal, which has become known for having raw oysters at market price consistently on the menu.

## How to Eat Them

While there’s no substitute for a platter of a dozen raw oysters on a bed of ice accompanied by lemon slices and horseradish, there are still some health risks to consuming the bivalves raw. Most restaurants serving oysters will also offer them up baked, broiled, chargrilled or fried. At Shuck’s in Abbeville, charbroiled oysters are offered eight different ways, including “candied” with a sugarcane pepper glaze.

## What About the Pearl?

One out of 10,000 oyster shells will produce a pearl in the wild. This happens when a piece of shell or sand gets inside, and the oyster begins to cover it with a shiny coating. It’s rare to find a pearl when eating an oyster in a restaurant, but if happens often enough that the Supreme Court ruled in 1998 that “So long as oysters are harvested and eaten, there will occasionally, though perhaps infrequently, be pearls found in oysters. Furthermore, when eating oysters, a customer should be aware of and alert to the possibility that a pearl may be found within the oyster.”



# let's get COOKING

Crabs and oysters take center stage - over the more talked about crawfish

and shrimp in Chef Bill Smith's aptly named cookbook *Crabs & Oysters*. You can find this little pearl on Amazon for \$20.

## Oyster Dressing

*A soup's best friend*

- 1 stick unsalted butter
- 5 celery stalks, thinly chopped
- 1 medium onion, chopped medium
- 3 cups cubed and toasted white bread
- ¼ cup chopped fresh parsley
- ½ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. black pepper
- ½ tsp. dried sage
- ½ tsp. dried thyme
- 2 eggs, well beaten
- 1 pint shucked standard oysters, drained

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Melt the butter in a skillet and sauté the vegetables to soften, but not brown. Pour the content of the skillet into a large bowl and combine with the bread and all the herbs and seasonings. Fold in the eggs and oysters. Let it sit a minute so the bread can absorb the moisture. Spread evenly in a buttered baking dish and bake for about 20 minutes or until brown on top and firm at the center.

## Fried Oysters

*Maseca is a corn flour milled for tamales, which makes a great crust for fried oysters*

- 2 cups Maseca
  - 2 cups self-rising flour
  - 2 tsp. coarse sea salt, plus more for dusting oysters after they are cooked
  - 1 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
  - 1 pt. shucked oysters, drained
  - 4 cups, more or less, oil for frying
- Lemon wedges

Combine the flours, salt and pepper in a bowl. Taste to make sure that it is seasoned to suit you; set aside.

In a straight-sided saucepan, heat the oil to 365 degrees. The oil should be deep enough to float the oysters. If you don't have a thermometer, you can test the oil temperature with fair accuracy by dropping a little of the breading in it. If it sizzles, the oil is ready. Drain the oysters.

Working in batches so as not to crowd the oysters in either the bread bowl or the frying pan, toss the oysters in the breading and then transfer them to the oil. Fry for a minute to a minute and a half at most. They should float and be pretty brown when done. Let the oil recover its heat between batches. Drain the oysters in a bowl lined with a clean kitchen towel (or paper towels) then dust with sea salt. Serve at once with lemon wedges and a favorite sauce.

## Basquaise Sauce

*Great with grilled or roasted oysters*

- 5 strips bacon, chopped raw, or 1 cup side meat, diced
- 2 celery ribs washed and diced (save and chop the leaves if they are pretty)
- ½ medium green bell pepper, diced
- ½ small red onion, diced
- 2 tbs. diced pimientos
- Zest and juice of 1 lemon
- Chopped fresh herbs (like thyme, chives, parsley)
- 1 cup good-quality olive oil
- Salt and black pepper, to taste

Brown the bacon in a large skillet. Drain bacon, leaving a little of the grease in the pan and cool it enough so that it won't cook the other ingredients. Stir in the rest of the ingredients and season with salt and pepper. Spoon over oysters and let sit for a little while before serving. Rough chop more parsley leaves, if desired and sprinkle on top at serving time.

## Spaghetti with Lemon and Crab

- 1 pound spaghetti
- 2 tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 lb. fresh crabmeat
- ¼ cup white wine
- ½ cup lemon juice
- ½ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. black pepper
- ½ cup grated Parmigiano-Reggiano
- ½ cup chopped flat-leaf parsley



For extra copies of these recipes or to email a copy to a friend, visit SLEMCO POWER magazine at SLEMCO.com.

Cook the pasta in boiling salted water as directed. While pasta cooks, heat the olive oil in a large skillet over low heat and cook the crabmeat just to warm it. Add the wine, bring it quickly to a boil, then immediately turn the heat back to low. Stir in the lemon juice and seasonings.

Drain the pasta, but reserve a little of the water. Pour pasta into the pan with the crab. Toss in a ¼ cup of the Parmigiano and the parsley. If the pasta needs more liquid, add a little of the reserved pasta water. Serve in bowls. Sprinkling the remaining cheese on top.

## Baked Crab Sandwiches

- 12 slices sandwich bread, trimmed of crust if you like, and buttered
- ½ lb. fresh special crabmeat, picked over for shells
- ½ cup grated sharp cheddar cheese
- 3 cups milk
- ½ tsp. curry powder
- 4 eggs, beaten
- ½ tsp. salt

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees. Place 6 of the slices of bread, buttered side up, in the bottom of a 9 x 12"-inch baking dish. Spread the crabmeat evenly on top. Cover with the rest of the bread, again buttered side up. Distribute the cheese over the bread. In a medium bowl, beat the curry into the milk until there are no lumps, then stir in the eggs and salt. Carefully pour half of this over the sandwiches. Wait 5 minutes for it to be absorbed. The bread should absorb all that you add and look wet but not swimming (you might not need all of the rest of the egg mixture). Cover and refrigerate for at least 2 hours. This can be done a day ahead and allowed to sit overnight. Bake for 45 minutes or until the egg is set at the center and the top is pretty and brown.



# SLEMCO Scholarship

## You could win \$2,000

ENTRY  
DEADLINE  
**MAY 15**  
2025

A TOTAL OF  
**\$40,000 IN COLLEGE  
SCHOLARSHIPS WILL  
BE GIVEN AWAY AT OUR  
88th ANNUAL MEETING  
ON SATURDAY, JUNE 14.**

Twenty students will each win \$2,000 to help pay for college or trade school. The process is easy, but you must apply before the May 15 deadline. Members connected to SLEMCO for one contiguous year prior to the deadline of May 15 can sponsor themselves, a spouse, dependent children or legal wards. Grandchildren are eligible only if they are the legal dependents or wards of members.

### HOW TO APPLY

Applications for the 2025 SLEMCO scholarship program were included with all February SLEMCO bills. And you can also apply online at our website [www.slemco.com](http://www.slemco.com). Submit your application online and receive a confirmation notice by email. It's quick and easy. *Lucky Number: 2045064502.*

Read the application carefully and follow all instructions. Applications for the scholarships will be accepted until Thursday, May 15. Delivered entries and electronically submitted entries must be received by 4:30 p.m., May 15, and mailed entries must be postmarked by that day. Entries can be mailed to the SLEMCO Scholarship Program, 2727 SE Evangeline Thruway, Lafayette, LA 70508.

### WHERE TO USE

The scholarship monies can be used by undergraduate students to attend, on a full-time basis, any public or private Louisiana university or trade school as accredited by the University of Louisiana System; Louisiana State University System; Southern University System; Louisiana Community and Technical College System; Louisiana Board of Regents Proprietary School System; Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges and Universities; or the US Department of Education.

### QUALIFICATIONS

Winners must have at least a 2.0 cumulative grade point average and plan to attend on a full-time basis (at least 12 hours) this fall. Students must be at least high school seniors to enter. *Lucky Number: 4519606700.*

IRS guidelines allow a parent to claim their college student child until the year he or she turns 24. We follow the same guidelines in awarding these scholarships. In order to sponsor a child, parents must still claim the applicant on their income tax return and the applicant must be under 24 years of age. Proof will be required. *Lucky Number: 4508104500.*

Any eligible family member can enter each year. Past winners aren't eligible to receive a scholarship. 🍀



### Start Today!

We've already received several hundred entries. Even though the entry deadline is not until May, get your application in early so you don't forget. If you have any questions about applying or qualifications, call SLEMCO at (337) 896-5384.



**LUCKY NUMBER  
WINNERS!**

### FIND YOUR ACCOUNT NUMBER AND WIN \$100 CREDITS!

CONGRATULATIONS to Bessie Perrin of Erath, LA, winner from our last publication. We've hidden 10 more SLEMCO account numbers in this issue of the magazine. If you find your SLEMCO account number, call Michelle Courvelle at (337) 896-2504. Once she verifies you as a winner, she'll credit \$100 to your SLEMCO account. *Lucky Number: 4502100808.* 🍀